

Mr. Sampath--the Printer of Malgudi

R.K. Narayan

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"There are writers—Tolstoy and Henry James to name two—whom we hold in awe, writers—Turgenev and Chekhov—for whom we feel a personal affection, other writers whom we respect—Conrad for example—but who hold us at a long arm's length with their 'courtly foreign grace.' Narayan (whom I don't hesitate to name in such a context) more than any of them wakes in me a spring of gratitude, for he has offered me a second home. Without him I could never have known what it is like to be Indian."—Graham Greene

Offering rare insight into the complexities of Indian middle-class society, R. K. Narayan traces life in the fictional town of Malgudi. *The Dark Room* is a searching look at a difficult marriage and a woman who eventually rebels against the demands of being a good and obedient wife. In *Mr. Sampath*, a newspaper man tries to keep his paper afloat in the face of social and economic changes sweeping India. Narayan writes of youth and young adulthood in the semiautobiographical *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*. Although the ordinary tensions of maturing are heightened by the particular circumstances of pre-partition India, Narayan provides a universal vision of childhood, early love and grief.

"The experience of reading one of his novels is . . . comparable to one's first reaction to the great Russian novels: the fresh realization of the common humanity of all peoples, underlain by a simultaneous sense of strangeness—like one's own reflection seen in a green twilight."—Margaret Parton, *New York Herald Tribune*

"Narayan's limits are meticulously imposed and observed but his humor and compassion come from a deep universal well, with the result that he has transformed his imaginary township of Malgudi into a bubbling parish of the world."—Christopher Wordsworth, *Observer*

Mr. Sampath--the Printer of Malgudi Details

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
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Bhuprakash says

As usual, this novel represents Narayan's unique story telling style. Characters are simple as well as the situations are. We often meet such persons or situations in our daily lives. In fact, a reader tend to visualise the characters as s/he passes through the pages and predict their action and feelings nearly accurately. Though novel set in 1938, but still relevant to the present generation. The writer conveys his powerful message through simple characters, natural actions and ubiquitous feelings. A great reading

Summary

Mr Sampath is a person who gets things done, either way – legally or illegally, habitually. In the fictional town of Malgudi, almost everybody knows him and he could influence anybody by his eloquence. He has an exceptional personality and extraordinary management and negotiation skill which he uses to get rid of tricky situations. A highly ambitious person, but meets his doom by his unrestrained lust and instincts.

Srinivas comes to the town to start his weekly publication The Banner and happens to meet the printer, Sampath. The latter agrees to print the former's publication. Srinivas, is an ordinary man full of ethical values and human conscience. With Sampath's ability to manage situations and finances, the press runs smoothly, without much botheration for Srinivas. Within a short span of time, the Banner becomes one of the most popular weekly publication with a sizeable subscriber base.

For some reasons, they had to discontinue the press for certain time. Meanwhile, they get involved in film production and things get complicated. Sampath falls in love with the main actress, despite having a family of his own. Blinded by the love for the girl, he forgets his social and familial responsibility. Things moved an awkward turn when the meek art director showed the same feeling for the actress and the film production faced huge losses. This was the end of the film shooting chapter and Srinivas found himself in his favourite occupation once again. He feels the absence of Sampath when he realised the need of funds.

Srinivas meets Sampath later. But this time he become stoic and reserved, does not show much interest in Sampath's whereabouts and departs. He becomes rather selfish, and considers it irreverent to dig further.

latner3 says

Very very good. Beautiful writing full of humour and compassion. A real gem.

Paul Bryant says

I remember this with warm affection and made a note years ago to read more of RK Narayan who - in retrospect - from the perspective of my woozy memory - is like Rohinton Mistry's benign old uncle. Back then I also read The Vendor of Sweets and The Painter of Signs which was my favourite because of a spiky back-chatty young woman called Daisy who was extremely charming. But these are all 3.5 star books. And I never did read any more. So that must change... while I wait for Mr Mistry's next 700-page slab (Mr Mistry, Jerker of Tears), I should eat up more RKN novels. Let that be one New Year Resolution I might actually enjoy doing.

Satya Krishna says

"By R K Narayan" is all it takes for me to decide how good a book is. I might sound like a fanatic to some, but so far I have not come across a single literary work of R K Narayan that has not left me amazed. Mr. Sampath, is a story of simple human beings full of all their follies and idiosyncracies. Every single character is very well fleshed out and very easily relatable (at least for me). At no time in the plot do you feel lost or feel that a plot point is unnecessary. A definite must read.

Greg Brozeit says

Despite its long history and ancient traditions, India has produced few novelists. In R.K. Narayan, however, India has produced a writer of stunning originality. His novels are set in the mythical region of Malgudi which he uses as a backdrop for the lives and adventures of his quintessential Indian characters. To me, he is India's cousin to Sinclair Lewis.

Although titled *Mr. Sampath: The Printer of Malgudi*, this story mostly revolves around a young journalist, Srivinas, who does all the writing for weekly newspaper that loses money despite a small, devoted following. Mr. Sampath is one of his printers whose grandiose dreams lead to the creation of a movie production company that lives briefly on dubious dreams. Within this small world, Narayan provides insightful—at times humorous, at others tragic—portraits about caste, family relationships, hope and failure, death, mental illness, religion, and the futility of dreams. His writing is profound simplicity; a pleasure to read.

Govind Sharma says

Masterly narration by RK Narayan, though the reader is left wondering what happened to Ravi after he was sent to a temple for faith healing.

Rishi Prakash says

I am just amazed at his consistency in getting it right again and again; every single book is different and still so nicely written. This book is no different where he comes with another set up in Malgudi and creates another great story. It is another delightful piece of writing by the creator of Malgudi. Funny, dramatic and filled with the finer emotions of human nature, Mr. Sampath made me smile all through and laugh out loudly at a few places.

It is about a newspaper "The Banner" which comes up in Malgudi and the two main characters who are responsible in bringing it out and the turn of events around them. It has many other characters which helps in setting it up and everyone is just perfect. It has many small small stories which have been woven intricately to set up the big story and that is what makes it an absolute gem. The entire movie making angle and the set up of the studio in that time is so fascinating that you have to just read it to enjoy it :-)

Anie says

Nicely written. It's based on four characters Mr. Sampath, Ravi, Mr. Somu and Srinivas. The novel is a dramatic page-turner and unpredictable in the beginning. It's the humor that pushes the story further. The dialogues are a great fun. The story is concluded in a nice way and many readers will adore this masterpiece for a long time.

Shivangi Tiwari says

Beautiful, simple, witty writing! Narayan is an enchanting writer, he does not need fancy words or complex characters to write an enjoyable story. He weaves a good plot from the commonplace aspects of humanity itself, and perhaps it is that his setting is familiar, or perhaps that his style is superior. His wit becomes apparent from the very first Chapter, wherein he says about the Banner, "Within twelve pages of foolscap it attempted to set the world right." Among my favorite lines are, "He felt, with an extravagant seriousness, that a whole civilization had come to an abrupt stalemate because its men had no better basis of living than public opinion.", "What great human forces meet and come to grips with each other between every sunrise and sunset!" and others. "It saves me postage to forget her" made me tremble, "...a girl in flesh ought to be worth a dozen on paper" amused me, "They had all along wished they could gag him, but it was not an easy thing to choke off a district judge, particularly when he was the president of the occasion" made me laugh. I felt particularly impressed by "It's all nonsense to say that she does all this only to attract men. That is a self-compliment Man concocts for himself. She spends her day doing all this to herself because she can't help it, any more than the full moon can help being round and lustrous". Narayan carries on through the whole book with relentless wit as in "Mankind has not yet learned to react to beauty properly".

A good thought is quoted in the form of the landlord, surprisingly: "When I become a handful of ash what do I care who takes my purse, Who counts my coins and who locks the door of my safe, When my bones lie bleaching, what matter if the door of my house is left unlocked?". Incisive remarks into human nature flow through the book, such as "He blesses with his hand, and kicks with his feet". A tragedy somewhat, made not just bearable but enjoyable by having a central character one can easily sympathize with, and Narayan's charming wit.

Smitha Murthy says

I got an early edition of this book and read the tattered brown pages with unwavering interest. As always, RK Narayan knows how to weave a story. Mirthful and philosophical, Mr. Sampath is a portrait of a man who embodies our struggles to survive in life.

Gorab Jain says

DNF at Chapter 8 :(

This must be a critically acclaimed masterpiece!

Never ever imagined I'd DNF a book by my favorite author.

I didn't find the characters interesting, the narration was pretty dry, no signature humor, the plot was a mumble jumble of many things... and after a certain point, couldn't bear it any longer.

The only experiment I loved here was the way the protagonist was being introduced ;)

Ajay says

There is one common thread that I always find in all the RK Narayan books, which I have read so far. Well, the characters like daisy(The painter of Signs), rosy (The guide) followed by shanti here in this book , are the best instances to talk about. I could construe that these characters represent the modern day woman. They have their free flow of thoughts. It is not pertinent to think about the past or the future to sacrifice the present moment for them. Personally speaking, looking at the outline of these characters, I have the deepest anger and contempt to the life they live for. But again putting myself in their shoes, i felt it needs a lot of courage to live such a life.

All a whole , this is one another master piece of RK NARAYAN,

Sailaja says

Though I have owned this book for a little over a decade, haven't read it in a while. Honestly I don't remember what I felt the first time I read it 10 yrs ago.

This time around I was just hoping that Srinivas doesn't lose his head and doesn't ruin his family. At every juncture I read with curiosity to find out what Srinivas thinks. His inner struggle to maintain composure in face of the myriad of different situations he finds himself in, is beautifully portrayed.

Each major character in the story is well conceived that you cannot help feeling for them..

Rebecca says

This was a strainful read for me. There were times more than once when I was tempted to abandon it but persisted as it was a paperback... Halfway through it became interesting and the last quarter went really fast.. But what and whom was the story about? "The title is rather misleading considering the fact that it is Srinivass story and not Sampaths entirely. The various mind ramblings and philosophical musings of Srinivas begot little interest in me..

Meghana says

What i love about RK's books is his ability to delve deep into the very nature of human and quite simply hold a mirror to the reader.

This book does that in a very gradual and nuanced way.

It almost creeps up on you when you least expect it, how each and every one of the characters in the book is relatable :

They are all in their own personal turmoil and I for one thoroughly enjoyed this potpourri of human emotions.

The story is - about Sampath : an unassuming man in the fictional town of Malgudi,

- as told by Srinivas: a hopeful writer and activist, and together they meet for '*The Banner*' a weekly publication which addresses civil and philosophical questions which Srinivas has taken upon himself to answer and which he believes will uplift his readers.

Srinivas leaves behind his wife and son to do this, not being very domestic in the first place, a stark contrast to Sampath - who with his friendly wife and 5 daughters and a son is the very epitome of a family man.

But a spanner is thrown in the works (quite literally in the printing press) when all of a sudden '*The Banner*' folds and in a whirlwind of events,

Srinivas finds himself writing a script for a 'romantic' mythological movie that his best friend and business partner is producing.

Between his demanding family , his neighbour Ravi- a lovesick man who longs for a dame he's seen but fleetingly, his landlord- an aging man who claims to have forgone worldly desires yet is never late to pick up rent, old traditionalists who would rather starve and die than bear the shame of working for the film industry, and 'Mr' Sampath himself, who takes a few wrong turns and loses himself along the way,

Srinivas finds himself in the thick of it all - all the things he was trying to run away from.

Will he ever make it out? Read the book to find out!
